



Memo

DATE: August 10, 2015
TO: City of Manitowoc Common Council
FROM: Nic Sparacio
Community Development Director
RE: Proposal for Full-Time Electrical Inspector

Since I started last October, I have been working with Building Inspection staff to evaluate our processes and implement greater efficiencies in our work. While we fully intend to keep working diligently toward that goal, there is a compelling need that I believe cannot be addressed with any amount of improved efficiency, and that is the workload of our Electrical Inspector. My proposal includes an explanation of the justification, job description assessment, and cost and potential budget impact. Please note that this is an update to the memo provided to the Licensing, Permitting, and Inspections Committee dated August 4, 2015. Updated items are noted with an underline.

Justification

Gap: The following data help to quantify the gap in electrical inspection needs. The 366 inspections performed in 2014 by the Electrical Inspector represent 43% of the number of electrical permits issued and 30% of the estimated number of electrical inspections that would have been required by the various permits issued that involve electrical work. The City either needs to require fewer electrical permits, or increase the resources dedicated to performing the required inspections. The option of requiring fewer permits is going to be limited by what the Uniform and International codes require of us and by the nature of electrical work as a primary life-safety issue.

Electrical Inspections Performed (2014)	<u>366*</u>
Electrical Permits Issued (2014)	858
Estimated Number of Electrical Inspections Needed (2014)	1209

*Please note that the previous memo to the LPI Committee did not use the correct number of inspections performed. I ran the report of inspections for 2014 based on the number "Scheduled" rather than the number "Required" inspections, which missed many of the inspections actually performed by the current inspector. I can provide additional documentation as to the difference in numbers for anyone who is interested. I apologize for this error, and I hope that the new information provides the needed clarity.

In addition to inspections performed for permits, the Electrical Inspector is required to respond to code related compliance issues of all types. While all of this work is not likely reflected in Code and Contact, the issues that were tracked indicate that the current Electrical Inspector completed 49 issue steps that involved additional site inspections in 2014.

Scheduling: The nature of the Electrical Inspector as a part-time position leads to scheduling issues. Contractors requesting inspections are limited to the morning hours when the Electrical Inspector is working, or the Inspector must attempt to accommodate hours outside of his schedule to respond to customer demands.

MPU Concerns: Manitowoc Public Utilities represents a semi-internal customer that generates significant demand for electrical inspections. Meter socket disturbances are particularly dangerous and are specifically required by our Building Code to be inspected. MPU frequently encounters meter sockets that have been disconnected or reconnected improperly and without an electrical permit or inspection. These situations present threat of electrocution, fire, and loss of life or damage to property if not handled correctly. While the number of such inspections is not tracked regularly, staff was able to identify some MPU correspondence from 2014 that showed 13 to 15 such inspections are requested on a monthly basis. MPU staff are concerned about the lack of inspections and have brought this issue to my attention on multiple occasions.

Work Without Permit: Electrical work conducted without a permit is not reflected in the numbers above. Again, the risk is the threat of electrocution, fire, and loss of life or damage to property. If the Electrical Inspector had additional time to respond to these situations, we would not only reduce these risks but also generate additional permit revenue.

FLSA Exposure: Because external and internal customer demands outweigh the time available to provide inspection services, it is not unusual for the Electrical Inspector to work more than the allotted 20 hours per week. Our organizational emphasis on customer service is a competing factor for a conscientious employee that wants to meet customer needs. The result is a very strong temptation to work more than 20 hours per week and to not report the additional time worked, as taking compensatory time would then result in falling even further behind customer demands. These factors all lead to an elevated risk that the City would face exposure under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Job Description Assessment

The job description as written is sufficient for the revised position duties, knowledge, skills, and abilities. The status can simply be changed from part-time to full-time, in my opinion. The position description covers the full spectrum of electrical inspection duties, allows the Electrical Inspector to contribute to inspecting one- and two-family residential construction, and requires the Electrical Inspector to participate in enforcement on compliance issues including Housing Code matters. The description should be revised to state that the position reports to the Community Development Director, and to correct other minor, typographical errors. The current Electrical Inspector possesses all of the required credentials.

Cost and Potential Budget Impact

The projected cost of increasing the Electrical Inspector position from part-time to full-time is \$44,919. This accounts for the cost of salary and benefits as well as a 2016 step increase. Work on the 2016 budget is underway, and I will be working to find ways to cover as much of this projected deficit as possible from existing department funds. I anticipate being farther along with that process by the time we meet to discuss this item, so I would like to provide additional information at that time.

Total Salaries, Wages, and Benefits (2015)	\$44,919
Projected Salaries, Wages, and Benefits (2016)	\$89,838
Budget Impact	(\$44,919)

Recommendation

By itself, increasing the Electrical Inspector to full-time will not solve these issues. While I feel this is a necessary step, we will need to continue to focus on efficiency and process improvements. We will also have the benefit of our Plumbing Inspector having earned his Residential Electrical Inspector credential this year. As he gets more comfortable with these duties, he can also contribute to improved execution.

Regardless of whether this change to the Electrical Inspector position is approved, there are planned efficiency improvements that we will be implementing. We will continue to utilize our new tools and procedures to prioritize and address compliance issues of an electrical nature. Our Neighborhood Improvement Action Team, our enhanced use of Code and Contact, and our use of VDI technology in the field are anticipated to provide some relief to the current workload.

I respectfully request that the LPI Committee authorize the Community Development Director to proceed with the process of seeking approval for increasing the Electrical Inspector to a full-time position.

CC: Clerks Office